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# **IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NASCAR**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the success of the National Association of Stock Car Automobile Racing (NASCAR). An examination and analysis of history as related to success provided a framework to understand the sport. Content experts in the motor sport field (identified through leadership identification) validated previously established NASCAR categories through a review process. Critical incident interviews were conducted to identify and prioritize the most important identified elements within these categories with the results of the interviews being compiled in a typology format. The typology was then reviewed by the Content experts for validation and modification of the framework. The study identified five critical variable categories that influenced NASCAR success: leadership, fans, sponsorship, television and other. The overall conclusion was that the isolated variables that impacted the past success and popularity of the sport will have significance for future success.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing (NASCAR) in order to provide a framework for understanding its success as one of the fastest growing sport in fans and venues. With 1998 being the 50th anniversary of the sport, the public eye upon the organization and the scrutiny of its followers was at a high level. An examination of NASCAR history as related to its past and present development will build a foundation of understanding of the sport for future planning. Significant events in its past, the cyclic nature of sport and its growth and popularity were examined. This analysis was achieved through examining popularity (Interest Level) and demand (Participation Level), demand analysis, forecasting, historical factors, and the history of the sport. A critical incidence approach was used to identify the past and present factors that have made NASCAR a success and that will have an impact upon NASCAR in the future.

## POPULARITY AND DEMAND

NASCAR as a motor sport has increased in popularity exponentially (43). It is America's fastest-growing professional sport (12). It is bigger and more popular than it ever has been in its 52-year history (28). The demand for NASCAR racing, especially at the Winston Cup level, is significant. Winston Cup Grand National Racing is the epitome of American stock car racing. It is a goal of every race car driver from midgets to sprint cars to join the Winston Cup circuit.

The fan base for Winston Cup racing grows yearly. The 1999 attendance increased 3%. The 1998 Goodyear Racing Report attendance was 6,310,027 (24). This is a 3.5% increase over the 1997 attendance figure of 6,091,356 (23). This represents a 9.0% increase over 1996 figures, with just one additional race. The 1996 season realized a 4.9% increase in attendance over 1995 with no additional races or venues (20). Growth seems to be flat or the growth rate is slowing (29).

The 1999 Nielsen Sponsors Report estimated 300,000,000 television viewers. All major sports TV networks that carried Winston Cup races, ABC, CBS, ESPN, TNN, and TBS, have set ratings and viewership records. (4) NASCAR has been second in broadcast and cable network ratings since 1993. The broadcast ratings have been erratic from 5.0 in 1993 to 5.3 in 2000. The highest scores were in 1997 (5.8) and 1998 (5.7). The same patterns were evident in the cable ratings. The rating in 1993 was 3.1 and 4.0 in 2000. The highest scores were in 1997 (4.3) and 1996 (4.0) and 1998 (4.0). The network rating have dropped 0.4, especially among males age 18-49. This has caused speculation about the popularity of NASCAR. The new media contract is only second to the NFL. This

indicates the confidence of the networks and cable industry in the increasing demand for the sport (9, 35, 45).

In the recent SBJ/ESPN Chitton Sports Poll, auto racing was the sixth best supported by fans and its biggest hero ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among sport figures (48, 49). The NASCAR website is the sixth most popular (39). In a poll on popularity of Sports Sponsors, NASCAR was number one in overall marketing efforts and was first in 18 out of 20 categories evaluated (13, 37).

New tracks are being constructed at a rapid pace. The 1997 season also saw the opening of new tracks in Texas and California. Only the California race was assured a Winston Cup Race date. The North Wilkesboro (NC) speedway lost the Winston Cup race dates it held continuously since 1949, when new track owners Bruton Smith and Bob Bahre moved one race to Texas and the other to New Hampshire. Tracks built without a race date in "97", "98", and "99" include those in Chicago, Illinois; Kansas City, Kansas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Madison, Wisconsin; St. Louis, Missouri; Miami, Florida; and Pikes Peak, Colorado (48). One new race date was added in 1998 at the new track in Las Vegas, Nevada. No new races were added in 1999 and one was added in Miami in 2000. Two new races will be added in Chicago and Kansas City in 2001. The number of Winston Cup race dates is limited due to the nature of the sport, meaning that all drivers vie to race in every race. Adding additional race dates is becoming logistically impossible. The new tracks seat hundreds of thousands of people, the older historical tracks do not. This is the reason for the closing of these smaller tracks, that is, fan demand, especially in the other regions of the country. There cannot be more than one race each weekend. There is a move to consolidate the tracks, media, and the

ownership. The primary reason is control (5, 38, 45). This represents a hard marketing approach.

The dilemma of the increased popularity, therefore, is knowing how to provide a top quality product with limited scheduling opportunities. The questions being raised concern the nature of change in the sport to meet the current demand without changing the product to the point of alienating the racing fan and causing a drop in attendance (12). There is already much controversy among the traditional fans about ticket prices and money and its influence upon the sport (51). Even though this seems to be the "hey day" of the NASCAR Winston Cup series, there is still controversy and there are questions about the ultimate future of the sport. (34) The basis of understanding the popular culture aspects is demand analysis.

## DEMAND ANALYSIS

Most sports or activities have a cyclic demand curve in which there will be periods of great popularity and periods where the demand for the particular activity or sport will be flat or decline (1, 17). Often the initial popularity is much lower than the final popularity in the flat phase of the curve. It is important to recognize the different types of demand curves and cycles that exist and how these factors influence the planning for a sport or activity. One of the primary problems with individuals, who do not understand this particular type of demand in terms of cycles, is that they plan for the long term as a straight line increasing demand function. The result is that the facilities are usually built because planning occurs right at the peak of the demand. [As an example of demand, the Atlanta track accounts for 50 percent (2.3 billion) of the economic impact of sport in the Atlanta area (4.5 billion)

(47)]. This exacerbates the problem in the downward phase of an activity or sports popularity. The demand is down and the facilities that have just been built are woefully empty. Nature of planning is extremely crucial to any sport or activity because you must provide enough facilities to meet demand but not enough to exceed the seat capacity within a certain period of time because there may be a significant down turn in demand.

The reality of single-entity ownership has been projected as one element that has helped in the steady growth of NASCAR (7). The primary question is: Where is NASCAR on the demand curve and are they planning too many facilities that will be empty when there is a down turn in popularity? (52). A more conservative approach of not building facilities before you know demand on a long-term basis is a prudent decision. The current philosophy in NASCAR is to build the facilities, the people will come and there will be a sanctioned race. This is the type of philosophy that has proven to be fallible in other sports and caused the over building of facilities. NASCAR is at a crossroads of changing from a regional to a national sport. These changes will ultimately influence the popularity and demand for the sport (52). It is important that NASCAR take precautions to continue to insure the popularity and demand through the proper changes. There is also a need to generate the necessary excitement to keep the sport on an upward growth phase without reaching a saturation point that will ultimately cause a down turn in demand in popularity of NASCAR racing.

NASCAR as a sport needs to achieve long term stability in order to maintain its high level of success. Studying NASCAR past and present, utilizing demand analysis, will enable the future course of the sport to be

predicted. The key is good forecasting models based upon an understanding of demand.

## **FORECASTING**

The basis of forecasting studies is isolating variables to help in understanding past and future performance. The basic focus is usually prediction and the isolation of important variables that will generate consistency. The foundation of this type of methodology has been the identification of external relationships. This type of model has also been used extensively in strategic planning as opposed to a management framework.

In the evolution of forecasting models, the initial literature was primarily management based. In the past 10 years, there has been a significant shift away from using management as a base science, to the development of forecasting as a science. The primary reason was the evolutionary nature of the discipline but also because the management literature did not provide the necessary depth of understanding of external relationships; especially those that are structural based. Forecasting also increased the accuracy of prediction for future strategic planning. This evolution does not negate the management literature but places it at a secondary position when external factors or variables are found to be important in studies. It is in the external relationships that are related to infrastructure where the most success has been in terms of forecasting studies. The basic premise behind strategic planning using forecasting models has been in the isolation of variables that help understand and predict future patterns. It is the identification with the testing of certain models to determine if this has an application in other sports. It is in the understanding of the important variables that

have had a significant impact upon single entity theory in determining its potential future application. Isolating the critical factors that effect forecasting is understanding the historical perspective in terms of the formation of its popular culture base.

## **HISTORY**

One of the ways to explore the issues of popularity and demand is to examine the significant historical events and determine the growth patterns of NASCAR through a historical folklore analysis. By understanding the historical trends of the sport, a sense of the future will be realized. The following section on the history of NASCAR will give an overall introduction to the sport from a historical perspective in order to develop a basis of understanding.

NASCAR roots obviously began before its 1947 incorporation date. Racing in its evolution began with the development of the car and the desire for speed and determining who had the fastest machine as well as the best driving ability. In its initial phases, especially with Ford, the idea was to demonstrate the product through racing so there would be buyers in the showroom. The common motto was "Win on Sunday, Sell on Monday" (21, 26). Even though this was the initial concept, from the very beginning, racing took on an entertainment value and the inclusion of the spectator led to folk heroes such as Barney Oldfield. From these humble beginnings, racing developed in many directions, such as one for speed and one for endurance. NASCAR began with the idea of modifying stock machines for greater speed and competition. The theory behind the sport was to be able to modify and race stock machines that are production line based. Even though the historical roots of NASCAR and its folk legends is one of

running moonshine in the hills of the South especially during times of prohibition, actually, stock car racing is much wider and represents a greater interest in modifying production cars. It has its roots in the production cars of Ford, Chevrolet, Chrysler, and other car manufacturers now gone. Today's NASCAR cars still have a great similarity and look like the production cars, but that is where the similarity ends (51).

In December of 1947, William Getty France saw a need to establish an organization of promoters, drivers, and mechanics to regulate the sport of stock car racing. Up until this time, the sport was very fragmented and promoters often would not even deliver on the purses that were advertised (28). There were many organizations and tracks that had their own rules and regulations and made it very difficult to establish a national champion with such variations. Bill France believed that an organization was needed for the sport to grow. This would allow for a consistent set of rules to insure uniformity and equity of competition (20). Therefore, in February of 1948, the National Association of Stock Car Automotive Racing was incorporated with Bill France named as the president. This organization transformed the sport into a business (28). This was an organization of individuals who represented the diversity of opinions in stock car racing that originally met with Bill France. Bill France emerged as the primary or dominant force at this meeting because of his organizational skills and vision (28). Golenbock and Fielden in the *Stock Car Racing Encyclopedia* (21) quote Daytona Speedway President Jim Foster saying:

Mr. France had something that none of the others had, and that was vision. Bill France was a visionary. He saw where the sport was going to go and he believed in it strongly, risked every

penny he had. Without Bill France, there would have been no NASCAR, would have been no racing as we know it today. (p. xv)

The development of NASCAR has been the evolution of the sport that has the ability to change to meet the needs of the structural elements involved. Most institutions of sport are so structurally rigid that change is very difficult. But with the open, interactive, and cooperative nature that was established at this first meeting, there was an atmosphere that allowed for change based upon fairness and equity. Most of the members recognized that the fairness and equity had to be applied so the organization established was given dominant position. If the established rules and regulations were not followed, then sanctions were permitted and everyone supported these sanctions. Without the rules and the sanctions the sport would fall into the anarchy of the past. This is where the structural elements of NASCAR were emphasized and their importance delineated under a banner of single entity theory/ownership. The organization was recognized as the institution that had to exist for the sport to grow and be recognized as a legitimate sporting entity. This does not suggest that the evolution of the sport was without problems. There were growing pains and periods that reflected the organizational development of a sport that was trying to gain recognition, and eventually did (28). Constant change and attention to the needs of the various elements made the sport strong. Its focus was on producing the best product to put on the track as well as the best show possible for fans and sponsors (28). It is important to understand the structural elements and the delineation of relationships in order to understand the past and its development in the future.

The important structural elements that have been identified in the Morais and Groves study were NASCAR, fans, the media, the sponsors, drivers, car and team owners, and merchandisers (1997). There are other structural elements, but these are the core elements upon which all of the other secondary elements depend. It is important to examine these structures in relation to their history and the relationships among one another to understand the evolution of the sport.

## THE EVOLUTION OF NASCAR

The evolution of NASCAR has seen different eras of development (21). The 1940's, especially the late 40's, were the period of organization. The 1950's were the development of the circuits and the tracks. The 1960's were the driver's era during which many of the folk heroes and legends were laid down. The 1970's were the era of the manufacturer. This is where the car manufacturers realized the benefit of racing to selling cars especially if they won on Sunday; people would show up in the showroom on Monday morning. The 1980's were the era of the sponsor and the 1990's have been the era of the media.

France was primarily a promoter and organizer of races. There were many other promoters and organizers on a number of circuits that were in direct competition with France. It was evident there was a need for a national association to insure a standard in the racing and to bring fairness to the competition (6). Seeing this need, France incorporated and developed the initial structure of NASCAR under the single entity theory (44). NASCAR was in direct competition with other organizations as sanctioning bodies for races. What made NASCAR most successful was the ability to develop a

competitive product, insure the fairness of racing at a highly competitive level that was a good entertainment product. During this period there were obviously forces especially in the driver category that were resisting the standardization and the rules and the sanctions of NASCAR. The NASCAR organization had to walk a tightrope during this time because they had to develop a product to attract race fans as well as to insure fairness of competition. They also had to be competitive with other organizations that were trying to develop stock car racing. One strategy used was a firmness of action and not tolerating any other opinions, and yet have a willingness to change to make the sport more competitive and to produce a better product for the race fan (28). In order for NASCAR to establish itself in the late 40's and early 50's, new rules and regulations had to be developed but even more important was that tracks had to be built. The forging of cooperative relationships with track owners was important in order to develop a sanctioning system in the circuit that would allow interested drivers to compete and provide a highly competitive product for the fan. The new super speedways were quickly becoming the premier tracks and attracting fans. The short tracks were giving rise to the super speedways where more speed could be obtained and drivers and cars could be tested so that better entertainment could be provided for the fan. Even though the entertainment value was prized, there was a constant striving to improve safety and equipment (11). The 50's were a time of change for organizational restructuring to insure the continuance of NASCAR. The realization of the vision was essential to the establishment of the reputation of NASCAR. This was a time of sales and selling the dream to drivers, fans, and track owners. Even though there was success, it was limited during this period and those who were in the sport were primarily involved because

of love of the sport and the competitiveness of racing. This was a time of sales, that is, convincing all the actors and groups that the investment would eventually flourish and their visions could be realized (16).

At the end of the 50's and beginning of the 60's the drivers were beginning to establish reputations and were becoming folk heroes in and among the various actors (18). The refinement of the entertainment was beginning and there was now a car and driver product that could be sold to race enthusiasts. The investors, during this period of time, were individuals who had a keen interest in racing and in the level of competition. This was a time of development and growth an era of driver legends. This was one of the most colorful eras of NASCAR because of the array of characters that raced (15). An individual in a small shop with limited resources could become a winner in any NASCAR race with dedication and determination.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the manufacturers realized the potential of NASCAR and became heavily involved, especially in the developmental phases. This represented a need for a larger investment as well as a greater technical knowledge to winning (14). Ford and Chevrolet have been consistently involved in NASCAR. Chrysler had a dispute with NASCAR over the hemi-head engines and has been out of racing since this dispute. The manufacturers not only realize that NASCAR is an excellent place for testing but also that those cars that tend to win on Sunday tend to be sold on Monday morning in the show room. Chrysler will join the NASCAR circuit again in 2001. This will increase the excitement and bring all the manufacturers into the sport. There is a very close relationship between car dealerships, manufacturers, and NASCAR racing. Manufacturers have always been a strong

contingency and an important influence in racing. This influence is not only in the base product but relates to America's love for the automobile.

The automobile is one of the elements that has radically changed life in the United States. People's love of their automobile has been almost legendary. With the invasion of the Japanese cars, this love affair has been somewhat tarnished. There is a natural attraction for the American public with cars that look like the ones they drive. The relationships among manufacturers in NASCAR's roots run deep. These roots extend especially into the sales and development arenas. The primary element among the manufacturers is ego and pride (11). Ford is one of the initiators of motor sports. NASCAR had to sell the manufacturers in the 70's and since this time they have been an integral part of the infrastructure.

After selling the manufacturers in the 1970's, the 1980's were the era of the sponsor. This primary reason for this is the fan base and loyalty that NASCAR has garnished (31). Without the money of the big time sponsors such as Busch, RJ Reynolds, Proctor and Gamble, Coke, etc., the high-tech nature of the sport is not possible. With the greater increase in money come greater technology, greater speed and competitiveness and, therefore, more fans. One of the success stories of NASCAR has been their ability to cultivate long term relationships with sponsors and use this money base to drive the sport (41). Many of the sponsors, in essence, help NASCAR because its logos appear on the sponsor's product. Therefore, NASCAR is promoted through the sponsors and sponsors during the 80's have become the driving forces behind NASCAR. The key element is the loyalty of the fan. Fan loyalty is about 72% whereas most other sports are about 30-35% (27). The



NASCAR fans tend to be very loyal to their drivers as well as their sponsors (31). Fans can get closer to the drivers than to athletes in any other sport. Often times the sponsors are keys to the fans intimacy of the sport. The fan is the center of attention and the drivers know the value of the sponsors and the fans and actively promote the sport at every opportunity. As the popularity and demand of NASCAR has increased, the 90's have become an era of the media. All of the major networks plus ESPN, TNN, and TBN, have extensive coverage of motor sports, especially NASCAR. It is the most popular sport in the United States, especially in terms of the growth of attendance (23). NASCAR is a sport that finances its own tracks and endeavors, not like some of the other major sports that depend on public support.

This is also the era of the merchandiser because with television popularity comes the possibility to merchandise. Television is being used during races and other time slots to merchandise. Merchandising is taking place in terms of retail stores, restaurants, racing facilities, etc. The media, especially television, at one point was not very interested in NASCAR and NASCAR had to provide the earned dollars to buy, directly from the television, their air time. As it has become more popular, television is buying time to cover more and more events. There is an insatiable appetite for the media for NASCAR events. The printed media has always given NASCAR good coverage especially in the towns and cities where NASCAR races. Many of the printed media are beginning to add special NASCAR sections, which has significantly helped to increase their circulation. This is another reason for the media to become directly involved in NASCAR. Sponsors are willing to pay the dollars for the race, especially in the television venue. Television and media

exposure means more fans and this has been one of the driving forces of the increased popularity of NASCAR. All aspects of the races are covered--the qualifying rounds, the happy hours, and practice sessions. Anything that has the NASCAR logo sells. (12). The purpose of this manuscript was to examine the relationships among the major NASCAR actors to determine the potential factors that have and will influence success.

## METHODOLOGY

This study explored the structural elements and relationships of the major actors in sport of NASCAR. It is part of an on-going research project concerning sponsorship effectiveness and fan response. Utilizing the typology developed by the Morais and Groves study (40), initial instrument development was undertaken in order to ascertain the viability of the project. The steps taken in this regard involved a morphological analysis (2). The aim of a morphological analysis was to structure the existing information in an orderly manner to identify the possible outcome of events. First, one must identify the most important variables, second each variable must be assessed, and third each is placed into a matrix to assess interactions.

The study used a critical incident method to examine some of the significant historical events. The results from this part were used to develop a framework to understand the lineage of the present and future relationships. The critical incident approach as described by Jonassen, Hannum, and Tessmer in Handbook of Task Analysis (10, 30, 32, 33, 43, 46) is a method used to identify critical elements by isolating and prioritizing elements essential to the organization. This analysis isolated the types of relationships that have had an impact upon NASCAR.

The primary purpose was to identify paths and establish what relationships have been important and what will be important in the future. Critical incident was one of the most cited methodology in the field of industrial/organizational psychology (10). This examination was necessary in order to understand the past and the future development of the sport of NASCAR.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

The form of data collection was a modified Delphi approach (17). The Delphi protocol was used so that data could be collected in rounds and a consensus process used to determine the structure as well as the relationships among major actors. This allowed for increased validity and reliability to be established based upon a consensus process. This is essential with the NASCAR project as one of the methodological problems is the different opinion among the groups about their relationships. The basic instrument was a semi-structured and panel format used to collect the data. There were two types of experts involved in the data collection, content experts and methodologists. The content experts were those persons that have knowledge of NASCAR and involvement in the sport. The methodologists were people who also have knowledge of NASCAR and involvement in the sport, and in addition, knowledge of the principles and procedures of research. These individuals were used to confirm the results and give feedback in order to validate the developed framework.

## **STUDY VIABILITY**

The first phase (Phase I) in defining the viability of the proposed study was to validate the categories that had been previously established from the Morais and Groves study

(40). A panel of content experts familiar with the structure of NASCAR and having first-hand experience with the sport, was developed to establish the validity and to edit the categories. An important element for the content experts was that they have knowledge of NASCAR, and of the individuals who are involved with NASCAR so that the developed categories are readable. These established and edited categories were used in phase two (Phase II) of the study. A leadership identification methodology was used to isolate the content experts for the panel. Leadership Identification, as defined by Gaylord (17), involves identifying the top individuals with NASCAR expertise and asking those individuals to identify others. This process is repeated until there is repetition of recommended individuals. The individuals identified through the leadership identification were contacted and asked to review each of the categories for their content validity. They were asked to validate the categories and to change the categories to make them understandable to individuals in the NASCAR industry (Round 1). Once these categories were firmly established, a group of methodological experts were asked to review the categories for content validity, as well as formulation of a framework for the data collection instrument (Round 2). Following a revision, the content experts were then asked, in a third phase (Phase III), to review the newly formed categories and to validate their content, again, and determine their readability for individuals who are involved with NASCAR (Round 3). The focus was on the ability to read and understand the categories; that is, to take it out of a theoretical perspective and put it into a practical perspective that can be understood by the individuals involved with the sport of NASCAR. The methodologists reviewed the categories in a fourth round. Once the categories and the content validity had been established, the instrument was

piloted with a group of reporters in attendance at a NASCAR race at the Michigan International Speedway (Round 5). These reporters were asked to do a cursory review of the instrument. This was not an intensive but an extensive review. The basic purpose of this fourth round was to establish the understandability of the categories with knowledgeable professionals of NASCAR and extensive writing skills. The purpose was to determine validity in NASCAR. This round was completed to put the instrument in final format to be used in the Critical Incident Phase (Phase II).

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVIEWS**

In an effort to understand the historical roots of NASCAR, critical incident interviews were conducted (Phase II). The critical incident method helps identify and prioritize important elements within an organization. The purpose of this phase of the study was to validate the significant incidents that have been developmental in the success of NASCAR. A group of content experts who were either historians or archivists and have researched the topic of the history of NASCAR were asked to serve as content experts in the panel. A leadership identification methodology was again used to isolate the persons for the panel. The number of experts on the panel was limited because of the number of people meeting the criteria of being an established historian or archivist. A panel of 12 content experts were sought. The interviews consisted of two open-ended questions: 1) What are the most important factors in making NASCAR such a success from the 40's through the 90's? 2) What are the most important developments for NASCAR, team/car owners, drivers, fan, sponsors, merchandisers, and media in the period from the 40's through the 90's? These questions were patterned after the

categories that were established in the study viability phase (Round 1). The content experts were then asked to review the significant events during each decade of the 50-year history of NASCAR. They identified those events that have had significant impact during that period, upon the formation of the structure of NASCAR, and were directly related to the success of the sport (Round 2). The responses were then compiled in a typology format. The typologies were then sent to the NASCAR content experts in order to validate and modify the framework (Round 3). The panel was asked to change and add to the incidents as they felt necessary to form a better typology of the events of the decades and the established categories. The methodologists reviewed the typology for readability and clarity (Round 4). The primary focus of this review was to develop and refine a framework for the historical understanding of the success of NASCAR that involves relationships related to structure. The content experts in this round of the study were to establish and modify a framework in order to build a base to understand present and future relationships.

## **RESULTS**

The basic design of this particular study was, during Phase I, to identify the content validity of the categories that had been established in the Morais and Groves study. This study was used as a basis to begin the Delphi process to identify structural elements. Part II of the study was use of the Delphi data collection system and critical incident methodology to identify the significant factors in the past that have had a significant influence upon NASCAR and those factors in the future that will be significant in the development of strategic planning for NASCAR.

The first phase of the study was to establish the content validity of the previous categories developed by the Morais and Groves study. These categories were reviewed by NASCAR experts, content experts, and methodological experts. The final individuals to review the categories were newspaper professionals who are familiar with NASCAR as well as the readability of the categories in terms of their basic definition and understanding. Not one of the categories was changed in the four rounds of review. The only changes that were made were editorial and there was a 90% agreement that the categories were measuring the content validity of the structural basis of NASCAR. The final results of the four rounds of the refinement of the categories established by Morais and Groves are in Appendix A.

There were twelve archivists/historians who were used in the panel to serve as content experts in Phase II. During the first round, the panel was used to identify important factors that made NASCAR a success from the 40's through the 90's, and identify the most important developments for the NASCAR structure from the 40's through the 90's. Data collected from the first round were formulated into categories in a typology and the content experts were asked to review these elements to identify changes that need to be made and to develop a consensus. In the third round, the content experts were asked to make any modifications and to validate the categories and typologies that had been established and make changes to the critical incidents. The methodologists were then asked to review the typologies for a theoretical basis, as well as the readability and its relationship to the basic framework that had been developed in Part I. The comprehensive list of the variables listed can be identified in Appendix B.

There were five identified critical variables that influenced NASCAR for its success: leadership, fans, sponsorship, television, and other. When the leadership variable was identified, it was found that there were three critical factors: leadership itself, the ability to change to make the sport more competitive, and the organization's ability to implement established policies.

When the fans were examined, it was found that the sport is fan friendly, the fans are very loyal, the icons and heroes and the fact that it is a family sport.

When sponsorship was examined, the only factor that was identified was that of amount of dollars in sponsorship.

When television was examined, it was found that the coverage was very important to the popularity of the sport.

In the "other" category, the factors that were identified were the basic audience, the dollars necessary to support the sport, and the willingness to change to support improvements.

The important variables identified in regard to NASCAR during the past 50 years were its leadership and the ability to identify important factors and change; the organizational leadership, that is, the ability to build a sound organization to implement policy; control to be able to implement established policies over a number of vocal divergent groups; knowing how to do business; and the development and cultivation of dollars to support the sport.

When the team category was examined, the important factors were winning, no rules, technology, improvement of racing techniques, dollars, and sponsorship.

The drivers' primary factors when examined were competition, winning, corporate image, team concept, and dollars.

When the fans were analyzed, it was found that the primary factors are wrecks, drivers, popularity, and loyalty.

The important sponsorship factors were amount of sales associated with sponsorship, the amount of dollars, and the ability to learn how to develop popularity.

When the merchandisers were analyzed, it was found that popularity, understanding fans, and change were the important elements.

When the media was examined, it was found that there were three important factors: ratings, objectivity, and popularity.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

When the common significant factors were reviewed, it was found that the most prevalent factors to success were leadership and structure and the ability to change to improve competition and develop the dollar resources necessary to support the sport. The fan has been developed as the center of

the NASCAR experience and the sport has been developed to meet the changing fans' needs. The ingredient of leadership has included how to make the sport popular and maintain the growth in relation to fan development. The key is the loyalty of the fan and this has been a direct factor that has attracted sponsorship which has provided the necessary dollars to improve the competition and, thereby, the sport. The popularity of the sport seems to be related to knowing what the fan wants and providing that on the track and the development of the necessary icons/drivers to serve as role models for the sport. The primary key to the popularity is the action on the track and the developing stories related to the drivers and their ability to be able to compete effectively to win.

This study is not to be definitive but only an exploratory investigation to isolate some of the important factors that have been related to the success of the NASCAR over the last 52 years. Its primary purpose is to gain insight, as well as identification of variables by group that can be related to the significant events during each period of time by each type of actor, and then to intercorrelate these factors into a final list that will have significance for future planning.

## Appendix A

### Revised Categories

#### NASCAR

- A. Only interest is NASCAR as an institution, maintaining its heritage.
- B. Interest in NASCAR as the premier vehicle for motor sports and development of prestige.
- C. Interest in competition in NASCAR as a product and satisfaction of association.
- D. Interest in accomplishments of NASCAR events, recognition and monetary profits.
- E. Interest is NASCAR as vehicle of promotion and profit.

#### Drivers

- A. Grounded in tradition of competition even if no money or popularity involved.
- B. Loves motor sports and NASCAR is best venue.
- C. Races only in NASCAR because of financial viability.
- D. Winning is only goal, win at all costs.
- E. NASCAR is the way for achievement of fame and fortune.

#### Teams Owners

- A. Believes in following rules and regulations to the letter.
- B. Values people as an organizational investment.
- C. Primary concern is the fan and in delivering a cost effective, quality product/service.
- D. Interest is in development of a specific image that will generate sales.
- E. Interest is in success at all costs to maximize sales and profits.

#### Fan

- A. Passing interest because of social connections or media.
- B. Developing interest in NASCAR.
- C. Involvement in and identification with NASCAR and/or driver.
- D. Repeated attendance at NASCAR events and use of products.
- E. Frequently attends NASCAR events, offers verbal support of the sport.
- F. Consumed in NASCAR on several dimensions.
- G. Advocate of NASCAR as a “religious” experience.

#### Sponsors

- A. Introduction of new products or brands to NASCAR fan markets.
- B. Builds image and develops brand names in NASCAR markets.
- C. Promotion to increase sales on all levels, especially on site-sales.
- D. Develops all levels of customers through long term commitment.

#### Merchandisers

- A. A home-based not-for-profit business that promotes driver or racing team.
- B. Home-based profit souvenir business, most important factor is association with NASCAR.
- C. Part-time parking lot regional business.
- D. Full-time flea market business, regional or national.
- E. Full-time mobile trailer NASCAR sanctioned business for drivers and sponsors.

- F. A store front with one limited and seasonal section of licensed discount NASCAR merchandise.
- G. Retail stores specializing in NASCAR direct licensure with large, year-around selection.
- H. Businesses licensed and under direct control of NASCAR, utilizing name to build profits.
- I. Specialty independent businesses not sanctioned by NASCAR.

Media

- A. NASCAR sponsored for promotion of the sport, drivers or racing teams.
- B. Sponsorship promotion that focuses upon the driver and racing teams and product association.
- C. High involvement and loyalty to the sport, reporting on the technical or popular aspects.
- D. Allegiance is to sports and to report the story as a commentator providing perspective and insight.
- E. National and/or regional coverage with an investigative element focusing on objectivity.

## Appendix B

### Important Variables

- A. France family leadership
- B. Organizations at National and International level to make NASCAR an equal in terms of international competition
- C. Fans -- Open policy
- D. Fan friendly
- E. Organization of Lobby Group by Bill France for automotive racing
- F. Rules established with fan in mind
- G. "79" TV, CBS snow storm/final rating 13.5
- H. Health of sport = # of new tracks/50s, 60s, 70s
- I. RJR sponsorship
- J. Constantly changing sport to make competitive
- K. People relate to cars/look able
- L. Facilities not at tax payers' expense
- M. Fan loyalty
- N. Level of competition
- O. Fans can identify with cars
- P. Ability to cooperate
- Q. Good people working for Bill France, Jr.
- R. Good entertainment / quality of event / a good show
- S. NASCAR good decision making
- T. Modern speedway made racing more competitive and exciting/attracted different audience type
- U. Federal ban on tobacco & RJR as sponsor
- V. Cable TV popularizing NASCAR
- W. Richard Petty/model for drivers and national hero
- X. Tracks and the development of fan amenities
- Y. NASCAR structure/public held corporation/open structure
- Z. NASCAR now accepted sport
- AA. Community support/cooperation for development at tracks
- BB. The Auto is icon of America
- CC. NASCAR formula
- DD. Direct factory support
- EE. NASCAR is reactive -- they wait for something to happen
- FF. Junior Johnson went to RJR
- GG. Television coverage
- HH. Fans keep the sport going
- II. Drivers biggest role in success - approachable and ordinary



## Important Incidents/Variables -- By "Category"

### Leadership/Organization/Structure

- France family leadership
- Organization at National and International level to make NASCAR an equal as race partners with other forms of racing
- Organization of Lobby Group by Bill France for Automotive Racing
- Constantly changing sport to make competitive
- Facilities not at tax payers' expense
- Ability to cooperate
- Good people working for Bill France, Jr.
- NASCAR good decision making
- NASCAR structure/privately held corporation/open structure/many tracks are public-owned corporations
- NASCAR now an accepted sport
- NASCAR formula of autocratic leadership has been successful over time
- NASCAR is reactive -- it waits for something to happen
- Understanding of publicity and how to obtain

### Fans

- Fans/Open policy
- Fan friendly
- Rules established with fan in mind
- Fans relate to and identify with cars
- Fan loyalty
- Good entertainment/quality of event/a good show
- The Auto is icon of America
- Level of competition
- Fans keep the sport going
- Image of driver vs. reality
- Fans feel they are part of the "NASCAR family"

### Sponsorship

- RJR sponsorship when sport was down helped organize
- Federal ban on tobacco & RJR as sponsor
- Direct factory support
- Junior Johnson went to RJR
- RJR's willingness to go to the "short" (Fri. & Sat. nights) small town events significant

### Television

- 79 TV, CBS/snow storm/final rating 13.5
- Cable TV popularizing NASCAR
- Television coverage

### Other

- Health of sport is indicated by number of new tracks in the 50's, 60's, 70's & 90's
- Modern speedway made racing more competitive and exciting/attracted different audience type/women
- Richard Petty/model for drivers and national hero
- Tracks and the development of fan amenities
- Community support/cooperation for development at tracks
- Drivers biggest role in success/approachable and ordinary

## Important Incidents/Variables -- By Group and Year

### NASCAR

- 1940's
  - Organization period
  - National champion established
  - Uniform rules established/fair and safety not considered at this time
  - Fair payout
- 1950's
  - Era of the tracks
  - Move away from stock cars
  - Factory involved/dictate rules
  - Building of Daytona
  - American Automobile Association departure/removed biggest hurdle NASCAR faced
- 1960's
  - Era of control
  - Factories pull out/can not control
  - Drivers try to organize
  - Growing pains
  - Safety issues/rules change
- 1970's
  - Era of business
  - NASCAR good business
  - Corporate sponsorship
  - Modern era/concentrate on best events
  - RJR enters and revitalizes sport
  - Factories out because they can not control rules and competition
- 1980's
  - Period of growth
  - '79 television/CBS
  - Madison Avenue becomes important
  - Fans different/diverse
  - Cable TV coverage
- 1990's
  - Period of growth
  - Growing pains to become a national sport
  - Biggest period of new track construction

### Team and Car Owners

- 1940's
  - Garage period
  - Small operations
  - Drivers more skilled

- 1950's
  - Team concept developed by one owner/took to extremes/driver curfews
  - Driver important element to winning
  - Technical improvements
  - Mercury Outboard/improve quality of operation, i.e. transport systems
  - Factory into racing/Motor City 250
  - Ford Thunderbird super charged engine
  - Factories went to teams/owners
  
- 1960's
  - Driver is part of a team
  - Technical improvements
  - Pit procedure improved/Wood brothers
  - Drivers organize/Curtis Turner and Tim Flock
  - Dodge and Ford dominate
  - Ralph Moody/developed standardized chassis
  
- 1970's
  - Need for improved equipment/learning
  - Business becoming important
  - Drivers as owners/beginning of end
  - Lee Iaccoca -- Ford out
  - Driver's strike in Talladega
  
- 1980's
  - Team concept/more testing and information
  - Corporate spokesperson
  - Manufacturers back in sport
  
- 1990's
  - Teams and drivers as stars
  - Drivers come from everywhere
  - Team skills improve

### Drivers

- 1940's
  - Bragging period
  - Curtis Turner
  - Moonshiner cars
  - Colorful drivers
  - Individuals more important than teams
  - Level of competition reason for participation
  
- 1950's
  - Moonshine/Outlaw Era
  - Fireball Roberts
  - Joe Weatherly
  - Junior Johnson
  - Herb Thompson\*\*

- Tim Flock
  - Lee Petty
  - Marshall Teague
  - Colorful Drivers
  - Individuals more important than teams
  - Holman -- Moody, very important
  - Focus on car makes
- 1960's
- Fred Lorenzen/good looks and articulate
  - More businesslike
  - Ned Jarrett
  - Richard Petty
  - Driver attractive "personalities"
- 1970's
- Richard Petty becomes icon and folk hero
  - Star period begins
  - Sponsorship spokesperson/especially STP
  - D.W./upscale promotion and team mode
  - Change from care to driver promotion
- 1980's
- Dale Earnhardt/icon and folk hero
  - Bill Elliott winning Winston million
  - Corporatization of drivers
  - Drivers becoming "mikes" in public -- loss of personalities
- 1990's
- Dale Earnhardt/icon and folk hero
  - Jeff Gordon/icon and folk hero
  - Jeff Gordon winning Winston million and 2nd National Championship
  - Dollars reason to participate
  - Drivers attract women/mechanics attract men
  - Fan focus is now on driver
  - Businessmen first, drivers second
- Fans
- 1940's
- Stock car enthusiasts
- 1950's
- Factory popularity
  - Fans primarily males
- 1960's
- Motor sports enthusiasts
  - Loyalty/try products because they support racing

- 1970's
  - TV popularity
  - Different tracks/different type of fan
  - Loyalty to sponsors
- 1980's
  - Mainstream/regional
  - New breed of fan/money and behavior
  - Upgrading of facilities
  - Women become fans
- 1990's
  - Mainstream/National
  - Focus on drivers vs. cars
  - World-Wide Web -- means of staying connected, being on the inside of the sport
    - individual driver sites
    - team sites

#### Sponsorship

- 1940's
  - Local sponsorship/especially auto suppliers
- 1950's
  - Factory sponsors
  - Mercury outboard/first of non-automotive sponsors
  - Marshall Teague
  - Pure Oil
- 1960's
  - Auto sponsorship/regional/need money now that factories are out
  - Goodyear
- 1970's
  - Corporate sponsorship/moving billboards
  - STP/Petty
  - Unicol "76"
  - Pepsi/Petty
  - Coke/Bobby Allison
  - RJR marketing model
  - Made sport lucrative and appealing
  - Gatorade
  - Tide, Hanes, and other sponsors appealing to women
- 1980's
  - TV/National sponsorship
  - Fan loyalty tied to sponsorship
  - Sponsorship dedication important to success
  - Wrangler/Integrated marketing
  - P&G/new marketing methodology/especially for women

- 1990's
  - Sales/Merchandising
  - Sponsors help popularize NASCAR in community
  - Focus on women/i.e., Tide, Maxwell House coffee

#### Merchandisers

- 1940's
  - Souvenirs and local sponsored products/i.e., calendars
- 1950's
  - Souvenirs and regional sponsored products/i.e., calendars
  - Kieftopher, Mercury\*
- 1960's
  - Give-aways/Hats & T's
- 1970's
  - Give-aways/hats & T's/postcards
- 1980's
  - TV discovers NASCAR
  - Fine points of contest\*
  - Popularity drives merchandise -- Maxx cards, Racing champion & Matchbox car models
  - Learned how to broadcast
  - Women becoming fans
  - Drivers exploiting merchandise
- 1990's
  - Icons of sport influence
    - race merchandise
    - corporate merchandise
    - period of collectibles
  - Corporate approach/fans & drivers
  - Big business
  - Earnhardt/made \$30 million selling his rights
  - Renegades
  - TV sales--QVC, ESPN, Shop Talk
  - Internet sales

#### Media

- 1940's
  - Auto media
  - Regional newspapers
- 1950's
  - Auto media
  - Bill France cultivated media/writers
  - Regional newspapers
- 1960's
  - 1961 Firecracker 250/Wide World of Sports

- Big City Newspapers
  - No Media box in 60s/only observation platform\*
  - Low person on newspaper staff was racing editor
- 1970's
- TV tapes/Wide World of Sports
  - Print media
  - "79" CBX/high television rating
  - More knowledge becomes racing's move to more important positions
  - Recognition of safety needs for media (and fans)
- 1980's
- 1984 CBS/beat winter Olympics rating
  - 1984 Petty and Reagan picture in National press
  - ESPN/Cable (TNN, TBS, etc.)
  - Knowledgeable print
  - TV and electronic media professionalized
  - Readership survey indicated popularity of NASCAR
- 1990's
- Mainstream TV
  - World Wide Web
  - Some major newspapers still do not cover
  - 7 different cable show dedicated to NASCAR



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